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Smelik, K. A. D. 1990. The Literary Structure of King Mesha's Inscription. *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 46:21–30.

The Music of the Bible Revealed: The Deciphering of a Millenary Notation. By SUZANNE HAÏK-VANTOURA. Translated by Dennis Weber, edited by John Wheeler. Berkeley: BIBAL PRESS; San Francisco: KING DAVID'S HARP, 1991. Pp. xviii + 558. $29.95 (paper).

Suzanne Haïk-Vantoura believes she has deciphered the musical notation known to be expressed by the Masoretic accents of the text of the Hebrew Bible in *La Musique de la bible révélée* (1978), a book, musical scores, and sound recordings. She is a composer; her interpretation is purely deductive. (The decipherment is described on pp. 205–14.) She asserts (p. 130) that the major scale is fundamental and so must be the basis of the sacred music of the Bible. She notices that there are exactly eight accents that appear below the letters; so they must correspond to the eight notes of the scale. And one sign, the Silluq, comes at the end of every verse; so it must represent the tonic, the home note of the scale. Similarly Athnach, which occurs in the middle, represents the dominant or subdominant. Haïk-Vantoura does not explain how she assigned the rest of the sublinear accents, but she does say it took much time and effort. Which of the (Greek) modes to apply in any particular passage is determined by experimentation; the composer's artistry decides whether any note is to be sharp, natural, or flat (pp. 215–32). Chromatic Dorian, Hypodorian, and Dorian are deemed to be the most suitable modes in many passages.

The accents above the letters represent various ornaments to the basic melodic line. The patterns seem to be related to the shapes of the signs; and in all cases the names of the accents are taken into account.[1]

Any decipherment must rest on a bilingual or a virtual bilingual. No "bilingual" explaining the melodies exists, so a virtual bilingual must be carefully chosen. Here, the virtual bilingual is the coincidence between the number of sublinear accent signs and the number of degrees in the scale of Western tonal music. But is there any evidence that the Masoretes made a distinction between sublinear and supralinear accents? On this fundamental difficulty, the authenticity of the decipherment founders.[2]

The chief concern of the editor of this translation is the reconstruction of ancient chironomy (cf. his afterword, pp. 493–96). He has based his work on Haïk-Vantoura's interpretation, but she has used a chironomic interpretation of the shapes of the signs in her work (pp. 69–94). There is thus considerable danger of circularity.

The 1990 postface asserts (p. 516) that it was Moses himself who devised the melodies, but this conclusion is based on a very bizarre recreation (pp. 503f., 511f.) of the history of writing concocted from misunderstood and mistaken statements in popular world histories. One of Haïk-Vantoura's basic principles even contradicts the most (the only?) familiar principle of assigning accents to the text. She would have syllables devoid of an accent receive the note of the *preceding* accent, whereas when a word "gives up" its accent, it does so to the *following* word, as marked most often by Maqqeph. Grammar would thus suggest that notes be assigned regressively. Haïk-Vantoura also denies (pp. 165–78) the ordinary understanding that the accents are syntactic, but the 19th-century works of W. Wickes (*Two Treatises on the Accentuation . . .*, repr. 1970) and a recent article by M. Aronoff (*Language* 61 [1985]: 28–72) show that they correspond to an immediate-constituent, hierarchical analysis of the text. (For a thorough survey, cf. A. Dotan, "Masorah," *Encyclopedia Judaica* 16 [1972], col. 1401–82.)

Clearly this system is arbitrary and need have nothing to do with the music of the Masoretes. But Haïk-Vantoura is a gifted composer, and there can be no doubt of the suitability of her work for liturgical use. Indeed, at the back of the book are included testimonials from many of the most celebrated musicians of France—Dupré, Messiaen, and Duruflé among them—and the leading rabbis as well; and also one from a scholar of the Masoretes, Gérard Weil. Acknowledging the beauty of the music, he writes, "I must tell you, Madame, that you are very dangerous for the scientist in me."

PETER T. DANIELS

CHICAGO

[1] Most of the preceding remarks and the concluding paragraph were prepared on the basis of the French original and presented at the 1986 meeting of the Middle West Branch of the American Oriental Society, Berrien Springs.

[2] Any translation must balance between being faithful to the original and clear to the reader. This one seems to tip toward the first; numerous *faux amis* are allowed to stand. Examples that recur through the text: *gardé* 'guarded' for 'preserved', *reconstitué* 'reconstituted' for 'reconstructed', *englober* 'englobe' for 'include'. The editor's attempt (p. 41 n. 2) to substitute 'psalmodic' for 'poetic' as the label for one of the accent systems is silly. Just as there are non-prose passages in the 'prosodic' books, so there are non-psalm passages in the 'poetic' books.